Philomena cisterciensis (Burghausen, 1743), title-page

Instrumental iconography

Eric Hoeprich, in 'The earliest paintings of the clarinet' (*EM*, xxiii/2 (May 1995), pp.259–66), remarks on the inestimable value of the detailed renderings of the early clarinet found in two early 18th-century paintings and on the considerable detail found in the six panels of angel musicians painted in 1744–5 by Gabriel Weiss. Unfortunately, the 'artistic licence' shown by the painter is not restricted to depictions of hand positions or embouchures.

One of the two panels on which, we are informed, pairs of trumpeters are depicted, attests to a rather different iconographical tradition. The instruments played by the pair of angels on the sixth panel (that on the extreme right of illus.3 on p.261) are superficially trumpet-like as the entire body of each instrument is positioned in front of the player. However, and very noticeable in the case of the instrument 'nearest' to the viewer, is the constructional detail that places the end of the bell section closer to the player than the U-shaped tube that joins the first two yards. Moreover, unlike the pair of trumpets, these instruments are held in a particular two-handed manner that betrays another identity.

The instruments in the sixth panel are trombones. No trombones of this shape have ever been found, nor has their existence ever been mentioned in the contemporary music textbooks. On balance, it must be the case that it is the artist, rather than the organologists, who has erred.

Yet Gabriel Weiss is merely one of innumerable artists who, since the appearance of the trombone in the early 15th century, have contributed to a long and hallowed tradition of iconographical virtual reality. The misdepiction in the present case—and also in all of the others—may be simply restricted to the trombone; many artists have considered the smaller sizes of trombone, in particular, to be trumpet-like in shape. However, in calling into question this particular artist's actual experience of the trombone, which may have been limited to a single identifiable Latin-German schoolbook, there is also brought into play the potential to compromise the accuracy of other instruments depicted by him.

Taken more generally, this should caution us against accepting at face value the aspects of any single piece of iconographical evidence in which we are interested, while simultaneously casting a blind eye at its shortcomings elsewhere.

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The richly illustrated article by Erich Hoeprich invites several observations. Hoeprich declares 'the early date of many three-key clarinets': one is forced to ask which instruments he is talking about. An admittedly incomplete checklist of extant Baroque clarinets appears in A. Rice, *The Baroque clarinet* (Oxford, 1992), pp.162–5; Rice lists 31 two-keyed and 13 three-keyed instruments. The latter are mainly late and the apparently early three-keyed clarinet by 'I.C.DENNER' in Berkeley is certainly by Johann David Denner (1704–64), a son of the famous Johann Christoph Denner and obviously the last successor of the celebrated 'I. C. Denner' workshop, which continued after the death of Johann Christoph in 1707. The pair of two-keyed 'I. C. Denner' clarinets, formerly in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (MI 196, 197) and which disappeared in 1945, were bought from a church near Nuremberg in 1754 (see M. Kirnbauer, *Verzeichnis der Europäischen Musikinstrumente im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg*, ii: *Flöten- und Rohrblattinstrumente bis 1750* (Wilhelmshaven, 1994), and H. Heyde, 'Makers' marks on wind instruments', *New Langwill index*, ed. W. Waterhouse (London,